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**EL SALVADOR'S EXPERIENCE IN THE 1980s AND 1990s AS A  
MODEL OF DEMOCRATIZATION, LESSONS LEARNED FOR  
STRATEGY IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER**

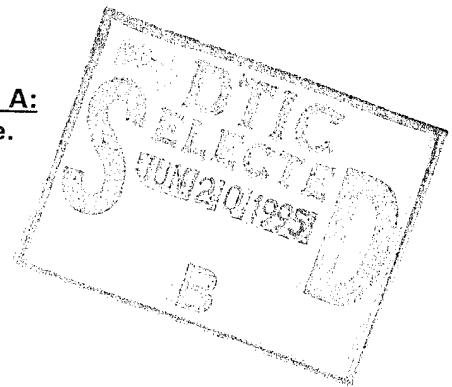
BY

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**U.S. ARMY WAR COLLEGE  
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## ABSTRACT

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El Salvador, discovered in 1524, was brought under rule of the Captaincy General of Guatemala until 1821, when El Salvador and other Central America provinces, declared their independence from Spain. With an area of 8203 square miles, and almost 6 million people, it is located in the center of Central America. A small country with over population, about 290 inhabitants per square kilometer, which has passed through a recent armed conflict and a transition to a modern democracy, which still has not ended.

The present paper relates and analyzes the causes of conflict, that basically were the Spanish heritage and international communist expansionism, the experience in the Armed conflict and actor that intervened in it, how El Salvador reached the peace, what is the current situation and the advantage in the whole process of democratic reforms, and lessons learned for strategy in the New World Order.

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## **Historic Process**

**Spanish Heritage.** In the nineteenth century the country economy was based on agriculture and most of its wealth had come under control of small number of families, who were owner of the most "ejidos" or "latifundios"(large mass-lands),which farther on were called "haciendas" and "fincas". A coffee cultivation was established, which allowed the intensification of the power of landowner or economic elite.<sup>1</sup> Practically the economic elite ruled the country in conjunction with the military elite, as Spanish heritage, with the exception of General Gerardo Barrios, President of El Salvador in 1861-1863, who was assassinated by the "oligarchy" for his disagreement with their interests.

The Roman Catholic Church, as in the Spanish Conquest, contributed in alliance with the civilian authorities to despoil the lands of the indigenous communities and peasants. The ecclesiastic authorities maintained the supremacy over other churches, and good relationship with the economic elite-government and the military elite,

The U.S. approach toward Latin America (L.A.) in this century and early 1900s did not have a decisive influence in El Salvador. The first intervention of U.S. in L.A. was in 1823, when its president James Monroe declared that "The American continents.... are hence forth not be considered subject for future colonization by any European power"<sup>2</sup>. It was named the "Monroe Doctrine". This was seen throughout L.A. as a commitment to mutual security and cooperation. In 1904 the President Theodore Roosevelt proclaimed that the U.S. had the right to assume the role of an "international police power" in order to prevent European governments from exploiting the region's instability<sup>3</sup>. It supposed that the L.A. in general and El Salvador especially could develop economically and socially with the U.S. protection, but it did not happen as expected. In addition, by the 1920s the great "Depression" influenced El

Salvador, and began the economic, social and political instability which had been advantaged by the international communism.

**The Conspiracy from 1929 to 1979.** The international communism conspiracy begun with the foundation, In 1929 undercover, of the Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS), and the Central American Socialist Party (PSCA) by Farabundo Marti. In 1930 was founded the International Red Aid Society, "which was allied to the Communist Party"<sup>4</sup>. With those events the PCS initiated the work of growing the organization and indoctrination of the people, to start a revolution to take over the country and impose a communist system like in the Soviet Union.

In the same year President Franklin D. Roosevelt, with his "Good Neighbor Policy", changed the policy of US intervention in Latin American affairs, stressed the importance of good will between hemispheric neighbors, and placed special importance on economic development<sup>5</sup>. By that time El Salvador had special characteristics: was mostly an agricultural country, its economy was coffee; resources were mostly unexploited; the majority of land belonged to small group or economic elite, who ruled the country. International communism focused in El Salvador, as easy country, to expand its ideology.

Farabundo Marti, in 1930, helped mostly by urban workers and peasants organized a demonstration on May Day. The government responded for the first time prohibiting strikes, rallies and the circulation of the leftist publication"<sup>6</sup>. On the other hands, the government let to the communists to contest in the electoral process. In January 1931 the president was not able to solve the social-economic problem which was deepened. The military, led by General

Maximiliano Hernandez Martinez, realized a coup and took over the country. In the same month the PCS had been convinced many people from the west of the country and decided to launch a bloody insurrection, assassinating unarmed middle class people. The military in conjunction with civilians stop the communists insurrection. The communists had not been prepared, and it was recognized by Miguel Marmol, one of the PCS founders<sup>7</sup>. After the communist military defeat, the PCS began the process of reorganization undercover, now infiltrating the guild and labor organizations. The strategy was to work only on the cities with the urban workers to conform a social-labor front.

During 1940s and 1950s was a period of major economic transformation with just the US approaching manufacturing investment<sup>8</sup>. That increased employment in the capital city. With the military government is formed the first political party-- the Revolutionary Party of Democratic Unity (PRUD)-- which was born as a new coalition between military and the very small industrial bourgeoisie who wanted modernization. The changes of the "old" society produce the beginning of democratic process. Its policies allow the growth of the Salvadoran economy and the development of small middle and working class only in the cities. During that years the Armed Forces (A.F.) were organized in four services: Army, Air Force, Navy and Public Security ( National Guard, National Police and Treasury Police), with the responsibilities for national defense and internal security.

By the 1960s the economy was dependent on coffee, sugar, cotton and the increasing manufacturing. The "Alliance for Progress" initiative toward L.A., which was supported by Organization of American States (OAS), incorporated political, economic and social reforms. That policy help to El Salvador to develop a number of schools, public works and public

building projects. In addition, the "Central American Common Market" is formed with de U.S. support, providing a " free trade zone" in Central America. The US view was to provide an infrastructure for its investment.<sup>9</sup>

President Julio Rivera ( 1962-1967 ) with his open policy, three main parties emerged which were penetrated by the PCS: the Partido Democrata Cristiano (PDC), Movimiento Nacional Revolucionario(MNR), Union Democratica Nacionalista (UDN). The opening of the government let the PCS, between 1966 and 1977, to compete in three presidential elections and six elections for the congress and local governments.

One important aspect to mention is the Church maintaining relations with the government, the upper class, and the military elite; and still sharing the fears of communism. The metamorphosis of the Church began in the 1970s.

The lack of land, jobs and the new problem of overpopulation had forced about 300,000 Salvadoran to emigrate to Honduras in search of land and employment. As a result in few years most Salvadoran emigrants became landowners where they were initially employees. In July of 1969 the brief war between Honduras and El Salvador took place. It was called the " Soccer War" but the real reason of the war was that Honduras expropriated the lands of Salvadoran -mostly peasants- who emigrated to Honduras. Many Salvadorans were assassinated by recently formed civilian armed groups named "La Mancha Brava". The rest of the Salvadorans were obligated to go back to El Salvador. The Salvadoran forces penetrated as far as 29 Kms ( 18 mi.) into Honduras but were stopped by the United Nations(UN). Both countries formally signed the peace treaty in October 1980, putting the border dispute before the International Court of Justice.<sup>10</sup> In 1990 the Court issued the award of disputed land. The

relations between Honduras and El Salvador currently are excellent.

El Salvador began the 1970s with the following changes: Politically, some changes occurred in the national policy, but still the military government continued ruling the country. The PCS with different strategy, practically abandoned the work in rural area of infiltrating the labor organizations and political parties in the city. The three main opposition parties joined and conform a coalition called Union Nacional Opositora(UNO) for the 1972 presidential election. Economically, the old oligarchy and the new bourgeoisie still remain as the landowners, controlling the capital, and the exportation as coffee, sugar and cotton . Unemployment increased as did the necessity of land, in the first place due to many Salvadorans who were obligated to return to El Salvador from Honduras; and secondly, the collapse of the Central American Common Market in 1969, which obligated El Salvador to reduce exports and increase the imports. Socially, a rapid population growth which increased the necessity for land reforms. The Church with about 95% of the population as followers, still maintained its control and the old convenient alliance with the economic elite and the military. The economic modernization and successful industrialization program in El Salvador, and US support and investment were neither enough to change in considerable mean the living condition of the majority, nor to stop the emerging communist revolutionary movements.

The limited vision of the governments during 1970s to project and implement a major and adequate structural reforms that were truly necessary, helped to increase the global crisis.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the President Colonel Arturo Armando Molina during his administration ( 1972-1977), implemented two main programs: first, a school

building program called " One school per day " which built more schools than other administrations, giving employment to many teachers. Secondly was initiated an ambitious land reform program which was expected to be successful, this initiative was early obstructed by strong economic elite and landowners, who demonstrated their economic and political power over the government. On the other hand was organized ORDEN, a paramilitary organization controlled by the president and the military elite. ORDEN put offices near each military post and base to get information through the people about conspiracy against the government by emerging communist movements; to survey and inform the behavior, thinking, and ideology of military personnel, principally the officers; and, to enhance and maintain good relations between the government and the population.

The last events are related to the conspiracy or the international communism ( IC ) toward El Salvador from 1929 conducted by the PCS. In the decade of 1970 the communist movements implement the "Revolutionary Strategy", planned and supported by Cuba, orienting their main efforts on Nicaragua, El Salvador and then Guatemala, as a result of the Tricontinental Conference and Solidarity Latin American Organization ( OLAS ) which took place in 1960-1967 in Havana, Cuba.<sup>12</sup>

The PCS is obligated to accelerate a new insurrectional cycle to take over the national power and impose insurrectional communist system. The left extremist organizations emerged rapidly. Those groups were formed by students and teachers from the National University; high school students; worker and Church sectors. They deepened the discord between social classes, taking advantage of the social-economic crisis.

Table 1 The organizations of the communist groups in 1970s

ARMED FRONT (ORGANIZATIONS)	MASS FRONT (ORGANIZATIONS)	POLITICAL FRONT (POLITICAL PARTIES)
The Popular Liberation Forces (FPL)	Field Laborers Union (UTC)  Central America Peasants Federation (FECCAS)  Revolutionary Popular Block (BPR)	
The People's Revolutionary Army (ERP)	Popular Leagues 28 of February (LP-28)	Salvadoran Revolutionary Party (PRS)
National Resistance Army Forces (FARN)	Popular Unified Action Front (FAPU)	National Resistance (RN)
Central American Workers Revolutionary Party (PRTC)	Popular Liberation Movement (MLP)	
Army Forces of Liberation (FAL)		Salvadoran Communist Party (PCS)

Source: Estado Mayor Conjunto, Fuerza Armada de El Salvador, 1992

Most of those organizations had three fronts:<sup>13</sup> an armed front for kidnapping, assassinations and short military actions as attacks security corps' personnel; mass front for working with the social sector in promoting student marches, disturbances, and strikes against the government; and political parties, with the intention to continue contesting in elections. These activities increased the government instability.

In 1979 the Archbishop of the Catholic Church Oscar Romero, becomes an outspoken critic of the military's rule and economic injustice.<sup>14</sup> It was the first time in public that a church leader criticized the military government. The old alliance was disrupted. Furthermore, the Church suffered an internal division between 1960s and 1970s in two ideological flows: the progressive Church, younger clergy who have a Marxist interpretation of gospel, and believe in the "Liberation Theology"; and the traditional Church, the conservative clergy who believe in the encyclicals and practice the gospel.

Because of the disruption of the trilogy, the Church tried to separate the people from the military and the economic elite, and attract them by means of religion. In this sense while the conservatives tended to support the government, the progressives supported the guerrilla-terrorist groups. The progressives organized community study groups in the city and countryside, giving them religious-communist doctrine and influenced the head of the Church, who becomes later one of the most public critics of the government, military and economic elite.

The violence and crisis began to polarize. The society in which the right and left sides tried to protect themselves and attack each other. The squads to accomplish that kind of

mission appeared.

The Foreign Policy Association in the Great Decision 1990 p. 30, relate the emerging of death squads as follows:

" By the late 1970s, El Salvador had become increasingly polarized between left and right elements. Marxist guerrilla squads began operating in the countryside, attacking civilian and military targets in an attempt to disrupt the government. In retaliation, right-wing paramilitary groups, representing the landed elite and the wealthy business community, soon emerged. These death squads spread their own brand of terror, kidnapping and murdering suspected members of political opposition".

The violence generated more violence and the situation of Salvador was unstable. Those events attracted seriously the attention of the U.S. and in 1977 President Jimmy Carter's administration occupied the attention of human rights. Nevertheless the internal violence increased and the U.S. government cut the aid in 1979.

The events of the victory of the "Sandinistas" in Nicaragua in 1978 by armed rebellion, and the dramatic crisis in El Salvador sharpened by the well organized communist movement, reaching the anarchy levels, were seen by most officers in El Salvador Armed Forces, at medium and lower level of command, that the international communism was accomplishing the Central America revolutionary strategy: first is the seizure of Nicaragua; next is El Salvador, to be followed by Honduras and Nicaragua. As a result the young officers in conjunction with some civilians and politicians made a coup on 15 October 1979. A

"Government Revolutionary Junta" was formed by two military officers and three civilians, who announced the "Proclamation of the Armed Forces", that would establish a emergency program with social, economic, and political reforms in the following main points: cease violence and corruption; guarantee to go into effect human rights; adopt measures to conduct a just distribution of national wealth, including a land reform program; to orient in a positive way the international relations. The majority of the population supported the emergency program. On the other hand was a strong rejection by right and left sides. The right wing sow that the reforms will affect its status quo. the left side or communists believed that with the reforms will lose too many followers to continue the insurrectional cycle. Instead of joint work with the Armed Forces, they increased the violence and terrorism activities.

### **The Armed Conflict from 1979 to 1991**

El Salvador, with the escalation communist aggression, faces the most unfortunate and bloody conflict in its history, which had direct influence in the Salvadoran society. When the conflict began there was a "Junta" ruling the country, which initiated to implement democratic reforms. With the election were established two legal governments, that continued with the democratic programs, but its weakness in not controlling the corruption, implementing wrong economic measures, and a well organized communist-terrorist opposition in the political-military field, do not let the development of the programs as projected.

The opposite forces, the FMLN, developed a "revolutionary war" strategy to take over the country, by destroying the country's economic infrastructure, attacking the country's A.F. to

destroy it or defeat it, and implementing the struggle classes. With the coup d'état the A.F. committed to the people to make democratic reforms. At the same time the A.F. faced an irregular war, which they were not prepared to fight. The conflict provoked the massive displacement of the people from the country side to the cities and emigration to other countries.

It is important to mention the key role played by the Catholic Church, the economic elite, the United Nations, the media and the international community. If on one hand their attitude, sometimes, complicated the conflict, on the other hand most of them contributed to a political solution of the crisis.

**The Government.** At the end of 1979 the violence continued. It became clear the measures of the Junta will be carried out. In January 1980 following the collapse of the first Junta the second Junta was formed. The Junta was criticized for the incapacity of controlling the "political assassinations"<sup>15</sup>, the structural reforms began with the objective of changing the traditional economic power and calm down the excitement of the people. The land reform, the nationalization of the country's banks and export trade were implemented under a deep polarization of the society. The land reform program was under the direction of the U.S. State Department, and the American Institute for Free Labor Development.<sup>16</sup> Most of the reforms met with incomplete success. Even the Junta allows the opposite parties to contest to elections; constituent assembly elections in 1982, drafting the 1983 constitution; presidential elections in 1984, in which the opposition won. The constitution of 1983 strengthened individual rights, established a republican, plural form of government, strengthened the

legislative branch, and enhanced judicial independence. It also codified the labor law.

The center-left government elected 1984-1989 focused the policy in maintaining free elections, the effect of the constitution, the respect of human rights, and legislation reforms. In that sense were realized elections for deputies to the Assembly, and mayors in 1985 and 1988; and elections for president in 1989.

The first talk with the FMLN was realized in 1984, a series of negotiations led to no positive outcome. Meanwhile, the government completed the nationalization of the country's bank and export trade of coffee, cotton, and sugar; adopted a series of austerity measures, which proved not popular to the left and right sides, and the population, in other words, the land reforms continued with incomplete success. As a consequence the government was criticized for "official corruption, inefficiency and ineffective reforms."<sup>17</sup>

The Alfredo Cristiani's Administration, 1989-1993, continued with democratic reforms and improved on the effort to respect human rights. He implemented an audacious program to rebuilt the country economically, socially and politically in what is called the "National Rescue Plan". President Cristiani put in execution the model of a market economy, based in enterprise freedom and non intervention of the state in the production and exchange of properties and utilities.<sup>18</sup> He started the privatization of the country's banks and some autonomous state companies, to open up domestic and external trade. In other words the Cristiani Administration privatized what the last Administration nationalized

One of the first things the Cristiani Administration did was to call for direct dialogue between the government and the FMLN in order to end the conflict by political means. The

talks continued with no success.

**The FMLN.** In October 1980 five separate guerilla groups came together to form the Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front ( FMLN ), named for a Salvadoran Communist Party founder in 1929. The FMLN with the support and leadship of Fidel Castro developed a series of strategies against the government, Armed Forces, and the society. In political, military and social fronts, it developed a complex and well organized structure in and out of the country: **the central committee**, conformed by five "commanders" of the five armed groups; **the social front**, student, teacher, worker, and peasant organizations; **the military front**, peasants, militia, armed forces, with its special forces and, urban commands; **the political front**, national, the progressive-popular church, the Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) ; international, the U.S. Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador (CISPES), and other "solidarity committee" through the U.S., Western Europe, Latin America, Australia, and New Zeland.

The FMLN received undercover support from Cuba, Nicaragua, the former Soviet Union, Bulgaria, East Germany, Hungary, Viet-Nam, Ethiopia, Libya, and others, in weaponry, military supplies, and personnel. The finance had two origins: the money from the kidnapping in the 1970s, and the money from, mostly, U.S. and European citizens and organizations such as CISPES through its 58 offices established mainly in the U.S.

In the beginning of the armed conflict the FMLN developed the strategy of "revolutionary war". Supported by international communism the FMLN launched its first "final offensive" in 1981, which caused a big impact in the Salvadoran society and the international community.

However, it represented for them a military failure. With the defeat, the FMLN adjusted its forces, incremented its military capacity, and adopted a "movement war" strategy in 1983, which achieved the capacity to concentrate and attack the brigade level units. Starting in 1984 the FMLN made tactical and strategic changes and developed a new strategy called "social-political war", with the purpose of organizing and controlling the civilian population to force recruitment to its forces, and, to disrupt the government by showing to the people that the government and Armed Forces can not protect them. In addition, the FMLN implemented a indiscriminate mine warfare over the country. By 1986 the FMLN implemented the "strategic counter offensive", which meant the execution of plans established before: incrementing the destruction of agriculture and industry, utilities, public transport; the incursion to villages and small cities, and, the urban terrorism and bombing activities. On the other hand the FMLN addressed a political-diplomatic pressure with the fictitious interest to solve the conflict. With the fall of the Soviet Union, the FMLN lost its main support and decided one more time to execute a final offensive, launching, by November 1989, the "definition military offensive" by looking to concentrate effort toward a national insurrection, however, it failed because of the lack of popular support.

**The Armed Forces.** With the coup and the proclamation of the A.F., the A.F. committed with the country to implement political, economic and social reforms, to assure a truly democracy. The proclamation did not include structural reforms in the A.F., which was neither well prepared to face the new political reality nor to face the irregular war.

On the other hand, the A.F. maintained a great influence in political decision making

along the conflict. Besides the coupe separated too many senior officers from the A.F., that allowed the officer class named "La tandona" to reach the highest levels and key command in the military, and control it; remaining until 1992 when they were retired.

The A.F. augmented its manpower, reorganized units and created others to confront in the best way the FMLN, which would have changes in its strategy and tactics as planned before. In that sense government and the A.F. would react to the implementation of a new strategy by the FMLN. The first strategy implemented by the A.F. was to "push back the guerrillas to the North, toward the Honduras border". With that strategy it did not defeat the guerrillas but secured the permanence of them at the border and their logistic support from Nicaragua through Honduras. The gradual counterinsurgency training and adequate equipment, as part of U.S. military assistance, later on, allowed the A.F. a success in tactics but not in strategic level.

By 1986, due to the FMLN's indiscriminate campaign against the economy, the A.F. deployed 60% of its forces in permanent military bases, to secure economic strategic locations, such as security to electricity, transport, communication systems, crops, and cities over the country; and 40% in military operations. The A.F. initiated an active defense attitude rather than offensive strategy. Later on the A.F. developed the "United to Reconstruct" plan in response of the FMLN "social-political war" and "strategic counter offensive" strategy. As Martin C. Needler, in the Armed Forces and Society book, ( vol. No.4 Summer 1991, p. 582), wrote:

" United to Reconstruct was developed in conjunction with planners from U.S.

Southern Command in Panama. The plan called for the integrated

implementation of a program for civic action, development ,psychological warfare, and the training of civil-defense forces".

The priority objective in this plan was the approach in better way by the A.F. and support the people who lived in conflict zones and misplaced living in around to the cities.

After of offensive of FMLN in 1989, the A.F. launched a military counter offensive, which weakened, in military terms, the FMLN, influencing them, along with other factors, to think seriously in about solving the conflict by political means.

**The Right.** The upper class concentrated the country's wealth, which meant the country's economic and resources consequently would maintain the economic power. After the coup 1979 the "Junta" initiated democratic reforms, including land reforms. The upper class refused to contribute to the reforms and the majority continue to leave and take out their wealthy, which contributed to increasing the economic crisis and serious financial problems for the government.

The coffee growers and merchants, landowners, industrialists, and businessmen belong to the National Association for Private Enterprise ( ANEP ). "Its members are politically conservative and oppose any change in the current policies of the government toward regulation. They also control considerable amounts of capital of the country."<sup>19</sup> In that situation, the private sector, looked for a political exit to its imminent lack of economic power by taking the advantage of image and charisma of Major (retired) Roberto D' Abuisson, and founded a political party in 1981 called Alianza Republicana Nacionalista ( ARENA). In 1982 ARENA won the majority in the Legislative Assembly deputies election.

After 1982 the less conservative participated more actively in the opportune solution of the economic crisis. That attitude created a division among conservatives and progressives that still exist . Some of them "lived in self-imposed exile in other countries. They are generally thought to support much of the right-wing terrorist."<sup>20</sup> As mentioned before the generation of violence under cover from the FMLN generated more violence from the right.

In the Alfredo Cristiani's government , 1989-1994 the right and the private sector recovered part of the prestige and economic power lost.

**The Catholic Church.** The Roman Catholic Church played an important role in the Salvadoran conflict. With an internal division among the church leaders, it has been one of the strongest critics of the Salvadoran Government and its A.F. and mediated in talks and negotiations between the government and FMLN. On the other hand the bishop Pedro Arnoldo Aparicio, used to attack the guerrilla members, as he did in his homily of 30 July 1982, when he said that the subversives who are in the mountains: " they are not genuine Salvadoran people, but people who have been deceived. They are Salvadoran bad sons, managed by the international communism, by Cubans and by Nicaraguans."<sup>21</sup>

The hierarchy became in politics, controlled by the progressives using the pulpit to religious sermons as a place for political meetings. That attitude increased the polarization of Salvadoran society and during 1980's the Catholic Church lost many followers, consequently is opened the opportunity for the growth of emerging Protestant churches. The announcement in 1984 by Catholic Church that it would try to mediate in the armed conflict would help to arise its image and credibility in the country .

**The Media.** The media played a important role in El Salvador . The domestic media, most of the time was neutral in the coverage of the events during the 1980s. Most of the reports were covered with background, obviously the events were happening within the country and they suffered the effect of the conflict. Sometimes the media were menaced by the FMLN for its accuracy in what was happening. In different perspective worked the international media, mainly from the U.S., which supported openly the FMLN. Daniel James in his 1986 "El Salvador" book, wrote:

" The Media have contributed much to the American public's ignorance and confusion over El Salvador.... the media ignorance of El Salvador history, culture, and language led them to make reports or judgement that were simplistic. For example, they repeatedly blanketed all Salvadoran history from 1932 to 1979 as a half century of repression".

It is clear that the most important US newsgathering organizations most of the time forgot the "responsibility of the press." The majority of over 700 international reporters stationed in El Salvador during the conflict, worked without bases and background to collect the information. It seem that the most important thing, was to get and send the information rather than to investigate first if was true or false. " Perhaps the first thing to be noted about U.S. media reporting on El Salvador is the absence of background or prior field work not to mention the lack of knowledge of Spanish."<sup>22</sup>

At the same time the CISPES, organized in U.S. by PCS, influenced in the ordinary American and the Congress giving them a distortion about the reality of El Salvador. "CISPES not only spreads pro-FMLN and pro-Soviet propaganda in the U.S. but is also active, and sometimes a

leader in coalitions that lobby on Capitol Hill to influence U.S. policy toward El Salvador and Central America."<sup>23</sup> In the U.S. CISPES has well defined its objectives: to serve as propaganda organizer of solidarity meetings, demonstrate pro FMLN, gain credibility, and look for aid, collecting millions dollars for FMLN and giving different reality about El Salvador.

**The United States Foreign Policy.** Relations between U.S. and El Salvador improved during the last decade. The U.S. foreign policy had a clear influence in political, economic, social and military arenas, including the effort to end the internal conflict, and in arriving at the Peace Accords between the Salvadoran government and FMLN in 1992.

The U.S. foreign policy toward El Salvador focused on economic and military aid. The "economic aid was provided in the form of Economic Support Funds (ESF)....and development aid administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID)."<sup>24</sup> The military aid received under the Military Assistance Program (MAP), was oriented in six main areas :<sup>25</sup> education, tactical training, psychological operations, civic action programs, special units training, and logistic support. The military aid included U.S. military adviser and enhancing, enlargement, modernization, reorganization and equipping the Salvadoran A. F. The economic and military aid was crucial to the survival of the government and the capacity of the A. F. to contain the increasing insurgency.

Nevertheless, the U.S. intervention had some changes during the conflict in the search of accurate, opportune and adequate policy toward El Salvador as part of the East-West confrontation that took place in Central America.

In 1981 the U.S. President Jimmy Carter, at the end of his administration suspended the economic aid to the Nicaraguan Sandinistas for supporting the FMLN in El Salvador, and restored the military aid to El Salvador cut off a year earlier.<sup>26</sup> Obviously the cold war between two great power in El Salvador was flourishing.

"President Ronald Reagan's first foreign policy initiative was a vow to stop the spread of revolutionary communism in Central America."<sup>27</sup> The Reagan Administration saw the conflict in Central America in terms of East-West confrontation. The consolidation of power by the Sandinistas, in Nicaragua, and the increasing strength and capability of the FMLN in El Salvador were the main concern of the Reagan Administration in Central America. During the eight years in the White House, a major preoccupation of President Reagan was the threat of communism insurgency in " the U.S. backyard of Central America."<sup>28</sup>

As the violence continued to escalate, with the increment of FMLN terrorism activities, the Reagan Administration increased the U.S. military aid to El Salvador. In exchange for the aid, in 1983, President Reagan "pushed the Salvadoran Government to continue implementing land reform, to improve its human rights record, and to holds elections."<sup>29</sup> In April 1983, President Reagan, in a joint session of Congress to explain his policy on Central America, addressed a four point program in his speech: " to promote democracy, elections and human rights; to support economic development; to shield democracy and development through security support; and to support dialogue and negotiations in search of a peaceful solution for Central America". This policy had a great influence the Salvadoran government, being maintained by Reagan and George Bush administration's in order to stabilize and create conditions for a modern democratic reforms in El Salvador and Central America. With the

end of the Cold War and the fall of the Soviet Union, the Bush Administration pressed the El Salvador government and its Armed Forces, and the FMLN to finish the conflict as soon as possible, since there was no longer any reason to continue fighting.

**The People and the Social Consequences.** The conflict affected the living conditions of the majority of the population. It displaced hundred of thousands of people, damaged the education and health system, and diminished the possibility to satisfy their social needs. Before 1979 the major reason for the displacement of people it was unemployment and overpopulation, after 1979 was the violence. About 20 of 100 Salvadorans became direct victims of the conflict, both as displaced within the country and as refugees in other countries. The displacement of entire communities from the countryside to urban areas, brought as a consequence the disintegration of the family group:

" In 1981 the displaced reached 164,000 persons, by 1985 there were 525,000.... and they were located in 11 of the 14 provinces". according to the "Fundacion Salvadorena para el Desarrollo ( FUSADES )", Salvadoran Foundation for Development, in its Bulletin No. 12 in June 1986.

The emigration to the U.S., Honduras, Canada, Panama, and others countries, was over 1.5 million. About 1 million are living in the U.S., mostly as citizens or residents. The violence augmented the economic crisis that provoked in the people a negative attitude about El Salvador's future. In addition, there were business closed, the wealthy left the country, domestic and foreign investment stopped, the transport system was destroyed and damaged

about 50%, as bridges, buses and roads, crops burned, (cotton, corn, sugar), the utility system was damaged, 40% electricity system and the environment damaged, the forests destroyed, water and air contaminated, the fauna diminished, and erosion increased. Everything above brought to the people, as consequence, scarcity of food, higher utility prices and everything else: unemployment, reduction of the demand and increment of the supply, insecurity, and a major dependency on the international community.

**The United Nations and the Negotiations.** The United Nations ( UN ) has been played a key role following the conflict, participating in the negotiations as intermediacy, and monitoring the accomplishment of the Peace Accords by the El Salvador Government and its A.F. and the FMLN. The first presence of UN in El Salvador was in December 1989 by Organization of United Nations for Central America (ONUCA). The original mandate of ONUCA was: "Verify the cessation of aid to irregular forces and insurrectional movements; Verify the non utilization of any state's territory to commit aggression against another state."<sup>30</sup> The FMLN disagreed about ONUCA, it was opposed to demobilization in the absence of concrete political agreement with the Salvadoran government in December 1989. The ONUCA main effort would be in Honduras and Nicaragua, where the demobilization of contra would take place and ONUCA would verify it.

The requirement of Central America presidents for UN as mediator, and the international pressure over both the El Salvador government and FMLN to end the conflict, agreed in 1990 to continue the dialogue process and to accept the UN as mediator. In that sense, the United Nations Organization for El Salvador ( ONUSAL ) was formally opened in San Salvador on

26 July 1991. The ONUSAL would work in " two stages. In the first two months, the observer team would study El Salvador's judicial and administrative system and meet representatives from all parties involved in the conflict.... the second stage would begin, when ONUSAL would receive accusations of human rights violations and investigate them."<sup>31</sup>

The presence of ONUSAL in El Salvador was seen by some sectors as interventionists which affect the country's sovereignty, and by other sectors the credibility in the end of conflict and the beginning of the peace. In any case, is represented as confident step to open the alternatives to achieve the peace agreement. A series of meetings and talks followed in 1991 and the UN increased its negotiation role to bring both sides, government and FMLN, closer together.

As a result of the New York meeting, in September of 1991, some agreement reached about the creation of the Commission for the Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ). COPAZ is made up of two government representatives including a member of the Armed Forces, two FMLN representatives, and one for the parties or coalitions represented in the Legislative Assembly,<sup>32</sup> with the Catholic Church and UN as observers. COPAZ was the main organization charged with overseeing the implementation of the agreements. Nevertheless, it proved to be not efficient, and the main effort for implementation and verification fell to ONUSAL.

After many meetings, discussions and negotiation, on December 31, 1991 under auspices of the Secretary General of the UN, the Salvadoran government and the FMLN signed the agreement called "Acta de Nueva York," which included January 16, 1992 as date to sign formally the cease-fire and end definitely the armed conflict.( See Appendix 1 )

The final accord was signed on January 16, 1992 in Chapultepec, Mexico City, after twelve years of war, which had cost blood, destruction of the economy, and more important the suffering of the people. A tragic history and harsh experience that nobody in El Salvador wants to live again. The cease-fire took effect on February 1, 1992. The COPAZ and ONUSAL would increased their activities monitoring the accomplishment of the Peace Accords.

### **The Peace Accords.**

The Peace Accords essentially are series of points for the signers to accomplish, the government and the FMLN, in the democratic process of the country. The key provisions of the Peace Accord for the government are: military reforms, a new Civilian Police, human right provisions, political and social reforms that include judicial, electoral and land reforms. For the FMLN: the dismantling of its forces, and legalization as a political party. The ONUSAL would monitor the whole process. ( See Appendix 2 , Peace Accords)

The Peace Accords meant: for the government, institutional reforms, creation of new institutions dismantling others and, the deepest democratic reforms ever made by any other government. To the A.F., the profound reforms in its doctrine, education and organization. In other words they initiated the transition from the A.F. in war time to the A.F. in peace time. Which include the reduction of its forces to adapt to the new reality. For the FMLN, to incorporate a new political reality, and compete for the first time as political party, to elections for president, congressional deputy, and mayors. In 1993, they would contest with

all the ideological flows. Besides, they intended to change their strategy-- from political, military and social front to political-social arena. ( See Appendix 3 )

## **What is to Be Done ?**

The accomplishment of the Peace Accords and reconciliation of the society might be the last step in the consolidation of democracy. The monitoring of cease-fire by ONUSAL from February 1 to December 15, 1992 was the first phase.

To develop social and economic programs was launched the National Reconstruction Plan (PRN)<sup>33</sup> in the same year by the Secretariat for National Reconstruction (SRN), established by the government on January 31, 1992. In that plan all the organization and entities which have to do with the reconstruction of El Salvador as part of the Peace Accords, participate ( see Appendix 4 ).

The amendment of the constitution established the following reforms: the electoral system, which left the elections, in 1993 for presidents, congress deputies and mayors, called the "century elections," being the first election after the signing of the Peace Agreement. The reform to the judicial system, including the election of congressional member by the Legislative Assembly.<sup>34</sup> Improvement of human rights, with the creation of the attorney office for the Defense of Human Rights, establishment of truth commission to investigate serious acts of violence begining in 1980.

The transfer of lands to former Armed Forces and the FMLN combatantshas been implemented. A new National Civilian Police ( PNC ) was created with former member of the

FMLN, Armed Forces and civilians. The Armed Forces redefined their role in the society, by accomplishing the following main provisions:<sup>35</sup> reduction of 50% of military manpower; the creation of a new doctrine with stress on democratic values; reorientation of military intelligence; dissolved the security forces and the civil defense; suspended the forcible recruitment; accomplished the recommendation of ad-hoc commission created to evaluate and select out the officers that violated human rights during the conflict.

Although, the reforms are being implemented, the main problems remain in the costs to finance the programs to continue to rebuild the social, economic and political structures of the country . For 1994 it was estimated that about \$ 1.83 billion was needed.<sup>36</sup> That did not include the financing of military structure reforms. To alleviate that situation, the Salvadoran government implemented, in the same year, the "Government Economic Plan" (PEG). The PEG is a platform for the social development because it seeks the well-being and the progress of all Salvadorans, generates more resources to finance the social programs, especially the investment in people, in education and health.<sup>37</sup> With the PEG the president, by preventing tax evasion, and to limit the government expenditure, would collect money to finance the Peace Accords. What the international donor community had provided was not enough.<sup>38</sup>

At the end of 1994 and early 1995 the main points of Peace Accord have been completed. The points unfinished were the land transfer to former combatants, the restructuring of judicial power, and electoral reform.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the deficit to accomplish the programs is \$ 137 millions.<sup>40</sup> On the other hand the economic growth was 6.0 in 1994, according to the Planning Ministry of El Salvador.<sup>41</sup> Additionally other factor that improved the economy was about \$ 900 millions sent from Salvadorans living in U.S. to their families.<sup>42</sup>

Finally in social issues there are some problems which affect the democratic process. The remain armed groups in the countryside and new armed groups are emerging in the cities. These have been doing activities of kidnapping and assaulting for money, the people and private institutions. These have also been strikes and disturbances in the public sector.<sup>43</sup> The ONUSAL had estimated there are about 300.000 weapons in civilian hands, and the government has to take a strong measure to gather them.<sup>44</sup> The transition to peace has generated new problems, nevertheless the determination of the government, the FMLN, the people, and the international community is the best guarantee of the success of the democratic process.

## **Lessons Learned for Strategy in the New World Order**

The El Salvador experience in the transition and democratic process has left many lessons for different sectors of the Salvadoran society and the international community. The first lesson is that when there is no analysis, comprehension and understanding to solve the problem, it becomes more complex and hard to solve. Fortunately the "Peace Accords" are the best example that understanding and dialogue, with an evolutionary and dynamic thinking based in democratic principles, is the best way to solve the conflicts. The worst war is inside a country, and the best way to solve it is not to fight, but to reach an agreement that benefit on both sides.

The signing of the Peace Accords as a negotiated political solution was a victory for all Salvadorans and for each side. Total victory for one side was understood to be too high, with

the possibility that it would begin another war as in Nicaragua. All the actors who had participated in this democratic process have to understand that to achieve the Accords it is necessary to agree, to make the efforts, and to afford it.

The main problems in El Salvador never were treated deeply by the governments, in its opportunity to solve its land is needed because it is a small country, with few landowners and overpopulation; and the international communism expansionism over Central America.

During the conflict, the " U.S. government consistently mis-perceived the nature of the conflict and its combatants and, as a result, organized support that was in place too late to result in anything other than stalemate."<sup>45</sup> The support was gradual, not enough and most of the time it lost the opportunity. Initially, the perception of the U.S. government was different from the reality in El Salvador. However, the efforts to reach the peace for the Salvadorans, is considered as a well defined foreign policy in last decade.

The changes in El Salvador were not perceived by the FMLN. Its military confrontation conception to take over the country was maintained until 1990. " The FMLN did not understand the scope of change of El Salvador has experienced since 1980 and was victim of its own propaganda."<sup>46</sup> Although, these have been some democratic reforms, the conflict forced the efforts to military support rather than to economic and social reforms. After all, at the end the New World Order influenced the FMLN "evolution".

The interests and objectives of the government, the FMLN, the Salvadoran people and the U.S. were different.<sup>47</sup> The Peace Accords jointed them in three main interests and objectives: to reach the peace and to make the reconciliation of the society, the reconstruction of the Country, and unite El Salvador, with a modern democracy, with the international community.

The U.N. role was crucial to end the conflict by a negotiated political solution. The peacekeeping operation is a new concept, the ONUSAL had to have this concept and mission well defined and understood. Its impartial attitude and effective development would contribute to the success of the process.

The professionalism of the A.F. is demonstrated in the acceptance and accomplishment of the Peace Accord, and to subordinate to the political power, in other words, to redefine and accept the new role in society, support the democratic process and fight for the will of the people. Besides the A.F. understand that "they must maintain their professionalism, avoid partisan politics, and be ready to fight, just in case,"<sup>48</sup> and furthermore "diminish the traditional distinction between civilian and military jurisdiction,"<sup>49</sup> through the integration of efforts that imply a "constant communication between them on the utility of force."<sup>50</sup>

Approaching understanding of each other will strengthen the civil-military relationships.

The transition and democratic process made El Salvador more dependent on international aid. It is necessary to create a political, economic and social environment to assure a domestic and foreign investment as part of sustainable development. This includes the same opportunity to the people for having access to the education, health, work and the country's wealth.

Finally, due to the success of this historic process, El Salvador is considered as a "Model of Democratization" by the international community, and a good example of strategy in the New World Order.

#### Appendix 1 The salvadoran negotiations to reach the Peace Accords

23 Jan. 1989	El Salvador	FMLN offers to contest and respect elections if these delayed for six months with military confined to barracks.
21 Mach 1989	El Salvador	Cristiani offers talks; in response FMLN proposes new poll, withdrawal of U.S. military aid, radical reduction of military and trial of those responsible for repression.
1 June 1989	El Salvador	At his inauguration Cristiani offers talks without prior FMLN surrender.
4 April 1990	Geneva	Joint declaration of desire to end war, promote democracy and guarantee human rights; commitment to secret negotiations under mediation of UN Secretary General or his representative.
21 May 1990	Caracas	Three-phase agenda established: political accords sufficient for a cease-fire; integration of FMLN into legal sphere; consolidation of peace. UN to verify all accords. Military represented for first time.
26 July 1990	San Jose	Substantive agreement on human rights and establishment of ONUSAL, first UN verification body to oversee human rights at end of a civil war.
27 April 1991	Mexico City	Major accord to amend 1983 Constitution, including alteration of role of military, dissolution of military intelligence directorate and three paramilitary bodies, to be replaced by civilian police; new non-partisan electoral tribunal and more broadly elected Supreme Court; Truth Commission to be set up to assess violation of human rights by both sides.
26 July 1991	El Salvador	ONUSAL starts human rights monitoring under broad powers that preclude need for referral to New York.
11 Sept. 1991	El Salvador	New National Assembly ratifies constitutional reform required by Mexico accord of April.

25 Sept. 1991	New York	Rejection of phased cease-fire; FMLN agrees in secret annex to drop all demands for inclusion of its troops in military in exchange for participation in new police force (PNC); establishment of National Commission for Consolidation of Peace (COPAZ), comprised of parties, with powers to implement accords.
23 Oct. 1991	Washington	US Congress withholds half of military aid pending improvement in human rights and advances in peace process.
31 Dec. 1991	New York	Six-paragraph act ( 'New York II' ) ending the civil war is signed; calendar for implementation discussed until 14 Jan.
16 January 1992	Mexico City	Formal signing at Chapultepec Castle of accord consolidating all agreements since April 1991 in presence of new UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali and various heads of state.

SOURCE: The Pacification of Central America, book, by James Dunkerley, 1994

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## Appendix 2 The key provision of Peace Accords

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### Armed Forces Reforms:

- New armed forces doctrine, based on the constitutional reforms approved in April 1991 prohibiting an internal security role, except under extraordinary circumstances;
- New Armed Forces education system, stressing democratic values;

- Evaluation and selection out of the officer corps by an Ad-Hoc Commission composed of three civilians and two non-voting military officers;
- A 50% reduction of military manpower;
- National Guard, Treasury Policy, and National Police to be dissolved;
- New civilian intelligence service under the president's authority and legislative oversight;
- All elite counter-insurgency battalions to be dissolved;
- Subordination to the civilian power;
- Paramilitary groups banned, civil defense forces dissolved, new military reserve system instituted;
- Suspension of forcible recruitment;
- Preventive and promotion measures to promote the better fulfillment of Armed Forces regulations and to prevent violations of the same; and
- Relocation and discharges in the Armed Forces of the members of those units subject to be eliminated or dissolved.

#### **National Civilian Police:**

- New civilian police force for both urban and rural areas;
- Educational and other requirements for police personnel;
- Breakdown of recruits-- 20% from the old National Police, 20% from the FMLN, and 60% civilian with no ties to either group; and
- Preference for recruits with no direct involvement in the war to be trained at new,

independent police academy.

**Judicial reform:**

- Independent national judicial council to foster a fair and independent judiciary;
- School for judicial training to improve professionalism of judges and other judicial officials;
- Creation of a human rights ombudsman; and
- Charging the attorney general with conducting criminal investigations.

**Electoral reform:**

- Special commission to study draft reforms to electoral code.

**Land transfers:**

- Government implementation of existing land reform (transfer land exceeding the constitutional limit of 245 hectares) under supervision of a special commission;
- Preference given to former combatants from both sides in distribution of state-owned land;
- Government to finance long-term, low-interest loans for land purchases; and
- Moratorium on return of land illegally taken by the FMLN, after which those holding land may purchase it or be resettled.

**Political participation of the FMLN:**

- Measures to assure the incorporation of the FMLN former combatants, to civilian life; and
- The legalization of the FMLN as a political party.

**Cease of the Armed Conflict (CEA):**

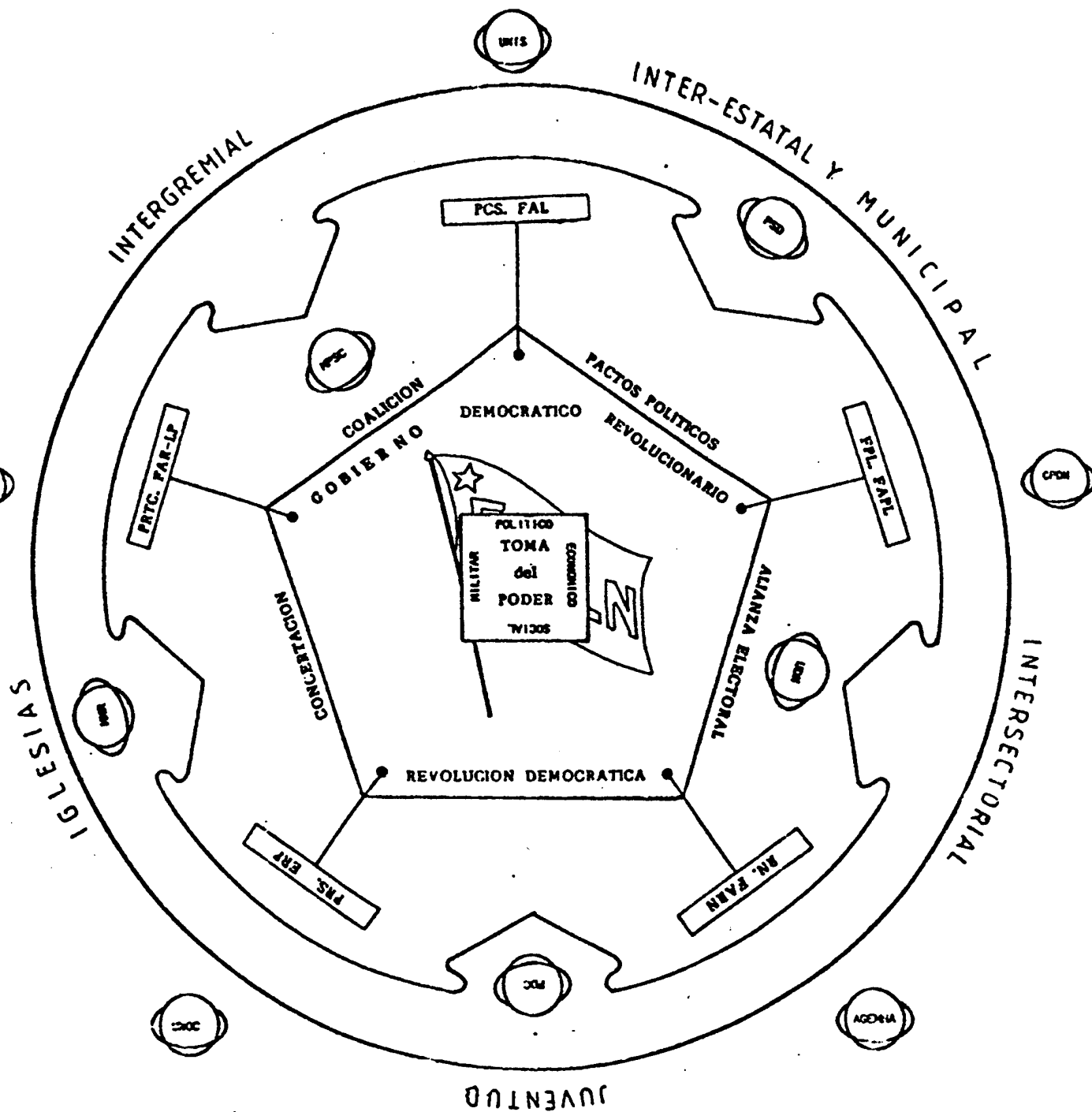
- The CEA would begin on February 1, 1992 and would end on October 31, 1992; and
- The FMLN forces would be dismantled by October 31, and their weapon destroyed.

The United Nations will verify fulfillment of the present agreement with the cooperation of the authorities charged with executing it.

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Source: Presidency Ministry of Government of El Salvador, 1992; Warriors in Peace Time, book, edited by Gabriel Marcella; and Background Notes by United States Department of State.

### Appendix 3 Strategy of the FMLN 1991-1994 to take over El Salvador



Source: Estado Mayor Conjunto de las Fuerzas Armadas de El Salvador, 1993

Appendix 4 Organizations and entities and its roles in the National Reconstruction Plan  
(PRN)

ORGANIZATION	PARTICIPATION IN PRN
Target Population	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-1,645,756 people, almost all residents of the 115 target municipalities</li> <li>-60,000 displaced people</li> <li>-40,000 repatriates</li> <li>-56,356 ex-combatants (both sides)</li> </ul>
Ministry of Planning (MIPLAN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-leads government participant in PRN</li> <li>-wrote draft plan, sought funds</li> <li>-administers all SRN money</li> </ul>
Farabundo Marti National Liberation Front (FMLN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-political representative of much of the target population</li> <li>-negotiates changes in PRN</li> <li>-organizes target population</li> </ul>
Secretaria de Reconstruccion Nacional (SRN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-set up to execute large part of plan</li> <li>-receives money from MIPLAN</li> <li>-approves projects, disburses money</li> </ul>
Other governmental institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-execute SRN projects or get PRN funds direct from MIPLAN</li> </ul>
Salvadoran non-governmental organizations (NGOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-execute SRN projects</li> <li>-through SRN or intermediary NGO</li> <li>-some feel excluded from PRN</li> </ul>
Foreign NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-executive SRN projects</li> <li>-four active, often intermediaries for national NGOS</li> </ul>
Target municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-execute SRN projects</li> <li>-work through MIA Program</li> <li>-many had mayors "in exile"</li> </ul>

U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-largest foreign supporter of plan</li> <li>-disburses money to MIPLAN</li> <li>-chooses and monitors projects</li> <li>-sole donor to SRN</li> </ul>
European Economic Community (EEC)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-unifies support of European countries</li> <li>-large reinsertion project</li> <li>-"coordinated autonomy" from SRN</li> </ul>
PRODERE	-support of World Food Program
United Nations Development Program (UNDP)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-U.N. support for plan</li> <li>-provides technical assistance</li> <li>-execute some projects</li> <li>-channels assistance to PRN</li> </ul>
United Nations Mission for El Salvador (ONUSAL)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-verifies compliance with accords</li> <li>-report on progress of PRN</li> <li>-focus on ex-combatants</li> </ul>

Source: Hemisphere Initiatives, Cambridge Massachusetts, A two Year Press Report on the salvadoran Peace Accords, March 1994

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